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Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 71/85, requested the Secretary-General to submit a report at its seventy-second session on means to strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. The present report is submitted in compliance with that request and on the basis of information received from Member States.

2. A note verbale dated 7 March 2017 was sent to all Member States, requesting their views on the subject, and was followed by a note verbale dated 12 June 2017. Replies from the Governments of Algeria, Greece and Qatar have been received and are reproduced in section II below. Additional replies received after 31 July 2017 will be posted on the website of the Office for Disarmament Affairs[1] in the original language received.

II. Replies received from Governments

Algeria

[Original: French]
[9 June 2017]

The problem of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region must be seen in a global context, one that takes account of the human, political, security and economic interests and concerns of the countries on both shores of the Mediterranean, by promoting initiatives designed to make the region a zone of lasting peace, stability and prosperity.

Algeria has an active Mediterranean policy, based on the principles of friendship and cooperation, good neighbourliness and mutual respect. It calls for the promotion and implementation of these principles.

For Algeria, Mediterranean security and development are closely linked to peace, security and development in Africa. It stresses the importance of integrating the Mediterranean dimension in the consideration of the future of the security system in Europe, with a view to safeguarding the interests of all concerned. It is on this basis that Algeria takes an active role in several initiatives and forums for dialogue established in the region:

(a) The Algerian initiative to combat terrorism in the Sahel is designed to confront the current worrisome situation, whose effects on security and stability in Africa are considerable. It is designed to strengthen the strategic, operational and military framework, launch socioeconomic development programmes, and build the administrative, technical and operational capacities of the security personnel of several African countries;

(b) The Western Mediterranean Forum (5+5 Dialogue) has fostered the adoption of cooperation measures in several areas, the consolidation of collective peace and security in the Mediterranean, and engagement with the issues affecting peace and security in the region;

(c) The North Africa and Sahel Regional Secretariat of the European Union Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative aims to promote cooperation among the countries of the region, on the one hand, and of the European Union, on the other, to reduce the risks arising from the illicit use of sensitive materials;

[1] www.un.org/disarmament.

(d) The African Centre for Studies and Research on Terrorism makes important contributions with regard to combating terrorism and related topics. It is an outgrowth of the desire of African States to coordinate their efforts to implement concrete, urgent and collective counter-terrorism measures with those of the international community;

(e) The African Police Cooperation Organization (AFRIPOL) is a tool of regional coordination whose purpose is to strengthen peace and security in Africa through building the capacities of the police forces of African countries in the areas of scientific policing, criminal threat assessment, combating cybercrime and combating the illicit traffic in arms and drugs, as well as consolidating the police forces deployed in connection with peacekeeping operations.

Greece

[Original: English]
[22 May 2017]

A. Regional cooperation

Greece undertook targeted initiatives, launching the Rhodes Conference for Security and Stability, in September 2016 (the second such conference is scheduled for 22 and 23 May 2017), the Athens Conference on Religious and Cultural Pluralism and Peaceful Coexistence in the Middle East, in October 2015 (the second such conference will be held in November 2017) and the Ancient Civilizations Forum, in April 2017. Greece also established trilateral schemes of cooperation among countries of the Mediterranean region, notably Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine. All the above emanate from our firm belief in proposing a positive and manifold agenda of cooperation, focusing on developing synergies and joint activities in the fields of culture, trade, education and research.

The "spirit of Rhodes" substantiates an adequate response to multiple challenges that faces the Mediterranean region, thus enhancing regional security and development. Besides, Greece convened the Athens Conference on Religious and Cultural Pluralism and Peaceful Coexistence in the Middle East, recognizing the urgency of communicating the message of cooperation and peace and to work on concrete alternative actions aimed at fighting radicalization that leads to violence. This conference dealt with the urgent humanitarian crisis currently faced by religious communities and cultural entities in the region, and a Centre for Religious Pluralism in the Middle East was subsequently established.

B. Security in the Euro-mediterranean region

The Union for the Mediterranean is a fundamental platform in the Mediterranean neighbourhood. Considering the many political, security and economic challenges faced by the region, the road map, as adopted by Union members in January 2017, signals their commitment to enhance cooperation in order to find common responses to those challenges. The road map (which includes enhancing political dialogue; ensuring the contribution of Union activities to regional stability and human development; strengthening regional integration; and consolidating Union capacity for action) is the testimony of Union members' will to support the work of this platform and invest in the region's growth, stability and security. "Soft" security issues — youth, education, women's empowerment, tourism, and intercultural and interfaith dialogue — have been taken on board by the Union. Reinforcing human capital, a key for stability and security in the region, through ensuring opportunities for all has also become one of its top priorities.

C. Non-proliferation and disarmament

Greece firmly believes that becoming party to all the multilaterally negotiated legal instruments on disarmament and non-proliferation by all States in the region of the Middle East would be a significant confidence- and security-building measure. Greece supports the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the conclusions and recommendations of the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference. Through dialogue, stakeholders can reach a common understanding on convening a conference (on a zone free from weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East), attended by all States of the Middle East on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by them, as decided by the 2010 Review Conference.

Qatar

[Original: Arabic]
[2 May 2017]

The State of Qatar affirms the following:

All causes of tension in the region should be eliminated and just and lasting solutions to the persistent problems of the region should be promoted through peaceful means, thus ensuring the withdrawal of foreign forces of occupation and respect for the sovereignty and independence of all countries of the Mediterranean region, as well as regional security and the right of all peoples to self-determination. The principles of non-intervention, non-use or threat of use of force and the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force should be fully adhered to in accordance with the Charter and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. Above all, the question of Palestine is urgent and pressing, and requires a just resolution.

The countries of the Mediterranean region should take coordinated overall measures, based on a spirit of multilateral partnership, towards the general objective of turning the Mediterranean region into an area of dialogue, exchanges and cooperation, which would guarantee peace, stability and prosperity. Such measures should include, inter alia, a lasting multilateral and action-oriented cooperative dialogue among States of the region.

Economic and social disparities in levels of development should be eliminated, and respect and greater understanding among cultures in the area should be promoted.

All States of the Mediterranean region that have not yet done so must accede to all the legal instruments related to disarmament and non-proliferation, thus creating the conditions necessary for strengthening peace and cooperation in the region.

The international community should encourage the States of the Mediterranean region to strengthen further their cooperation in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including the possible resort by terrorists to weapons of mass destruction, taking into account the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, and in combating international crime, illicit arms transfers and illicit drug production, consumption and trafficking.

The international community should encourage all States of the region to create the conditions necessary for strengthening confidence-building measures by promoting genuine openness and transparency on all matters related to the security of the region, which is closely connected with global security.